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Conference planned on effects of perchlorate

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LAS VEGAS SUN

Experts on perchlorate, a rocket fuel booster discovered in Nevada, California and Utah drinking water, will meet in Henderson later this month to hear public concerns.

Perchlorate, made as a rocket fuel booster at two plants near Henderson, has been traced in wells and other water supplies in three western states.

Southern California water companies detected perchlorate in Colorado River water in April 1997. The Southern Nevada Water Authority confirmed the presence of perchlorate in Lake Mead waters in August. A copper mine in Utah detected perchlorate in its water supply in December.

There is no information available on the effects of perchlorate in susceptible people, such as children, or developing fetuses.

The Interagency Perchlorate Steering Committee has scheduled meetings May 19-21 at the Henderson Convention Center, 200 Water St. A public outreach session is scheduled from 7 to 9 p.m. May 20.

There is no standard for health or environmental effects from perchlorate. California has set a guideline of 18 parts per billion for drinking water. The highest reading in Southern Nevada was 16 parts per billion taken last year. Since then, Las Vegas Valley levels have dropped to 12 parts per billion.

In addition to rocket fuel, ammonium perchlorate has been added to munitions, fireworks and matches.

Until recently, potassium perchlorate has been used to treat hyperthyroidism resulting from a condition known as Graves disease.

Thyroid hormone deficiencies or excesses can affect normal growth and development, a concern of the scientists conducting research on long-term effects of perchlorate exposure through drinking water.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Defense, the California Department of Health Services, the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Cocopah Indian Tribe, the Colorado River Indian Tribes, the Fort Mohave Indian Tribe and the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences are cooperating in an effort to set drinking water standards.

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